

alded a new Eire and prepared his people to embrace the changing world around them.

In celebrating Saint Patrick's Day, our nation not only remembers the apostle of Ireland for his achievements, but we also honor the many contributions that Irish Americans have made to their adopted homeland. As inheritors of Saint Patrick's legacy, Irish Americans have strengthened the United States with the richness of their unique history. Blessed with educators and business people, political leaders and people of faith, our nation owes a debt of gratitude to this thriving community from the Emerald Isle.

As Americans everywhere gather to celebrate our "Irishness," I extend best wishes to all for a wonderful St. Patrick's Day.

**Bill Clinton**

### **Statement on Signing Legislation on Highway Bridge Retrofitting and Replacement**

*March 17, 1994*

Today I am pleased to sign into law S. 1789—a bill that responds to January's earthquake in Southern California and will help States reduce potential losses from future earthquakes. This legislation expands the eligible uses of Federal bridge replacement and rehabilitation funds to include seismic retrofitting of highway bridges, regardless of whether the bridges are in need of other repairs or work. S. 1789 will greatly assist States in their efforts to reinforce bridges to better withstand earthquakes.

The California earthquake crippled much of the regional transportation system, serving as a sharp reminder of the vulnerability of our infrastructure to natural disasters and of the need to increase our preparedness for such events. The damage to the transportation network in Southern California had far reaching consequences. People's everyday lives were changed because of the difficulty of travel in the region, most notably in the time and effort spent getting to work. All levels of government immediately pulled together to minimize the disruption and resulting economic losses. That effort is continuing.

In my visits to the earthquake-damaged areas with members of my Cabinet and the Congress, one question was repeatedly raised: "We cannot prevent another earthquake, but can we prevent any of the resulting loss of life and debilitating infrastructure damage?" With regard to much of the damage to bridges and overpasses, the answer to that question is "yes." The California earthquake proved that seismic retrofitting works. None of the bridges in the Los Angeles area that were seismically retrofitted failed or suffered major damage as a result of the earthquake. The 12 bridges that were severely damaged during the earthquake had not been fully retrofitted.

The Congress responded quickly by providing much needed additional financial aid to victims of the earthquake through emergency supplemental funds. However, we need not only to provide assistance for repairs, but also to provide the flexibility to allow States to make sensible investments to prevent future losses.

I am very pleased that the Congress, led by Senator Boxer, has acted again to provide an additional tool to California and other States that may face similar natural disasters. This seismic retrofitting legislation does not increase Federal expenditures but allows States the flexibility to determine their own bridge needs. Together, these actions will not only speed recovery from the California earthquake but will also help mitigate potential losses to life and property in any State by future earthquakes.

S. 1789 will empower States throughout the Nation to make critically important investments in infrastructure to prevent highway bridge collapses. Ultimately, it will save both lives and dollars.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
March 17, 1994.

NOTE: S. 1789, approved March 17, was assigned Public Law No. 103-220.

## Remarks at the Bosnian Federation Signing Ceremony

March 18, 1994

**President Clinton.** President Izetbegovic, President Tudjman, Prime Minister Silajdzic, Mr. Zubak, the Secretary of State, Mr. Lake, the Vice President and I are happy to be joined by you, as well as by others here today. We have the Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia Vitali Churkin. Representing the European Union Troika, the Foreign Ministers of Greece, Mr. Papoulias; of Belgium, Mr. Claes; of Germany, Mr. Kinkel, and of course, David Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg, who have been the cochairs of the international conference.

In addition to that, we're very pleased to be joined by the Ambassadors to the UNPROFOR nations who have been so active in working for peace and in preserving the peace, General Shalikashvili, Ambassador Albright, and Members of the Congress. In the front row, Senator Lugar, Senator Stevens, Senator Levin, Senator Hatch, Congressman Lantos, and I believe Congressman McCloskey is here. There he is in the second row. So we thank all of you for coming today.

We have come to bear witness to a moment of hope. For 33 months the flames of war have raged through the nations of the former Yugoslavia. By signing these agreements today, Bosnian and Croatian leaders have acted to turn back those flames and to begin the difficult process of reconciliation.

Around the globe the tension between ethnic identity and statehood presents one of the great problems of our time. But nowhere have the consequences been more tragic than in the former Yugoslavia. There nationalists and religious factions aggravated by Serbian aggression, have erupted in a fury of ethnic cleansing and brutal atrocity.

The agreements signed today offer one of the first clear signals that parties to this conflict are willing to end the violence and begin a process of reconstruction. The accords call for a federation between Muslims and Croats of Bosnia. This Muslim-Croat entity has agreed on the principles of a confederation with Croatia. Together these steps can help support the ideal of a multiethnic Bosnia and provide a basis for Muslims and Croats to

live again in peace as neighbors and compatriots. The agreements are as important for Croatia's future as they are for Bosnia's. And it is the hope of all present today that the Serbs will join in this process toward peace as well.

These agreements are a testament to the perseverance and to the resolve of many people: the Croatian and Bosnian diplomats who kept probing for openings toward peace; the U.N. soldiers from many nations, here represented today, who have worked to bring both stability and humanitarian supplies; the NATO pilots who have helped put our power in the service of diplomacy.

I want to praise the leadership and courage of those who have come to Washington to sign these agreements, especially President Izetbegovic and President Tudjman. I also want to recognize the tireless efforts of Thorvald Stoltenberg and David Owen and, of course, our own Cy Vance, who is not here today, and especially to express my personal appreciation to the skilled diplomacy of Ambassador Charles Redman. Thank you, sir, for your work.

All of these people have done much to bring us to this point of agreement. Through Ambassador Redman's efforts and in many other ways, our administration has worked with our NATO allies, the European Union, Russia, the U.N. and others to help end this conflict. The fact that we have done this work together has made a significant difference. And to the Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia, I say a special thank you, sir, for your renewed energy in this area and our common hopes.

We have engaged in this work because the United States has clear interests at stake, an interest in helping prevent the spread of a wider war in Europe, an interest in showing that NATO remains a credible force for peace, and interest in helping to stem the terrible, destabilizing flows of refugees this struggle is generating, and perhaps clearly, a humanitarian interest we all share in stopping the continuing slaughter of innocents in Bosnia.

The documents signed here are only first steps, but they are clearly steps in the right direction. If they lead to an overall negotiated settlement, if a lasting peace takes hold in